

June 6, 1968

Miss Ann Landers
1000 Lake Shore Plaza
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Dear Miss Landers:

This is in answer to your query of May 31 about the possibility that LSD produces deformed babies.

Several investigators have reported such effects, for example Dr. William F. Geber of the Department of Pharmacology, Medical College of Georgia, Augusta. Similar evidence has been reported at a number of symposia as well. It is, however, a very difficult matter to pin down precisely, and I would have to regard the subject as still somewhat controversial in spite of a great deal of circumstantial evidence. It is, after all, not the kind of experiment that one can do under carefully controlled conditions in man!

There is one possible hazard of LSD that I can mention only as a speculation, but which I think has to be considered seriously. We do know that human subjects can show very long delayed reactions to individual doses of LSD. I think the question is open as to whether a fetus exposed to LSD might show some subsequent psychotic reaction that had been delayed into his infancy. The very least that ought to be looked into is the extent to which LSD enters the fetus across the placental barrier, and as far as I know there have been no investigations on this point. It also would not be an easy matter to investigate.

If Congress continues to cut back on budgets for health research, we may never have the answers to these questions.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

LANDERS